

THE DOMINANT FEATURE

The dominant feature is the object that our eyes are immediately attracted to and can be created by any number of techniques.

SIZE: The size of an object may draw our attention to it.

COLOUR: In colour films, the dominant is often achieved by having one colour stand out from the other.

FOCUS: Placing one object in sharper focus than the rest of the shot can also create a dominant.

The dominant feature in this shot is Arthur (Joseph Gordon-Levitt).

THE LIGHTING KEY

HIGH KEY:

Features bright, even illumination and few conspicuous shadows. High key lighting is often used in musicals and comedies.

LOW KEY:

Features diffused shadows and atmospheric pools of light. Low key lighting is often use in mysteries and thrillers.

HIGH CONTRAST:

Features harsh shafts of light and dramatic streaks of blackness. High contrast is often used in tragedies and melodramas.

SHOT / ANGLE / PROXIMITY

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW: This shot type can be disorienting and make the object seem very insignificant.

HIGH ANGLE: This angle reduces the size of the object, it can make the object seem harmless and insignificant.

EYE-LEVEL SHOT: Is the clearest view of a object.

LOW ANGLE: This angle increases the size of the object giving a sense of power and respect.

OBLIQUE ANGLE: Shot on an angle, suggests tension or transition This angle is used in the example.

COLOUR VALUES

DOMINANT COLOUR: The dominant colour is the colour most seen on the screen.

SUBSIDIARY COLOURS: What other colours are found on screen? Do they contrast with the **Dominant Colour**?

COLOUR SYMBOLISM: Are the colours used because of their symbolism? Do they reflect the characters personalities or traits?

SUBSIDIARY FEATURES

After taking in the dominant feature, where does the eye go next?

The **Subsidiary Feature** in this shot is the 'Bad Guy' in the foreground of the shot, he is slightly out of focus with his back to the camera.

The **Colour Value** of his costume blend with the set design which helps us to focus on the main character of the scene, who's costume contrasts against these colours helping to make him the **Dominant Feature** of the scene.

SCREEN DENSITY

How much visual information is packed into the image? Is the scene **STARK, MODERATE** or **HIGHLY DETAILED**?

Whilst there are a significant number of items or objects in the background of this scene, the image is not very dense because the focus limits the viewer to taking in only two main objects:

Arthur and the 'Bad Guy'.

The density of this shot is also helped by the **Colour Values** used, the dull room helps also us to focus on the two main objects.

COMPOSITION

How is the two dimensional space of the screen segmented and organised? What is the underlying design? Objects in the frame can be placed to help the audience to connect.

HORIZONTAL:

Horizontal compositions seem visually at rest and suggest placidity or peacefulness.

VERTICAL:

Vertical compositions seem visually at rest and suggest strength.

DIAGONAL:

Diagonal (or **Oblique**) compositions seem dynamic and suggest tension or anxiety. This composition is used in the example.

DEPTH OF FIELD

On how many planes is the image composed? How 'much' is in focus?

DEEP FOCUS: Allows all planes to be in focus at the same time.

SHALLOW FOCUS: More commonly, shallow focus allows only one or two planes are in focus.

The example has a relatively **Deep Focus** with the majority of the scene in focus. The foreground is only slightly out of focus, which draws our eyes to the back of the room to **The Dominant Feature**.

CHARACTER PLACEMENT

What part of the framed space do the characters occupy?

TOP: The area near the top of the frame can suggest power, authority and aspiration.

BOTTOM: The areas near the bottom of the frame tend to suggest subservience, vulnerability, and powerlessness.

SIDES: The left and right edges of the frame tend to suggest insignificance as these areas are farthest from the centre.

The example has our **protagonist** towards the top of the frame implying power and authority. The **antagonist** closer to the bottom implying vulnerability or powerlessness.

SHOT FRAMING

Is the framing **TIGHT** or **LOOSE**? Do the characters have no room to move around, or can they move freely without impediments?

Shots where the characters are placed on the edges of the frame and have little room to move around within the frame are considered tight.

TIGHT:

Longer shots, in which the characters have room to move around within the frame, are considered **loose** and tend to suggest freedom.

LOOSE:

The example has **Loose Framing**, the characters have the ability to move around within the frame without going outside the shot.

DIEGETIC AUDIO

Diegetic Audio is a sound whose source is visible on the screen or whose source is implied to be present by the action of the film.

Character voices, sounds made by objects in the story, music coming from instruments in the story space are all examples of Diegetic Audio.

It is important to note that **Diegetic Audio** can be either on screen or off screen depending on whatever its source is within the frame or outside of the frame (radio playing, family member playing an instrument, thunder clap).

NON-DIEGETIC AUDIO

Non-Diegetic Audio is a sound whose source is neither visible on the screen nor has been implied to be present in the action.

Narrators commentary, sounds effects which are added for the dramatic effect, mood music / sound tracks are all examples of Non-Diegetic Audio.

It is important to note that just because you cannot see the source of the sound, that doesn't make it Non-Diegetic Audio. If the sound fits within the environment (birds squawking in a forest scene, car horns near a busy road), it should be considered **Diegetic Audio**.